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Farm Broadcasters Letter



United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250-1340 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2620

July 23, 1993

FLOOD DISASTER ASSISTANCE -- In testimony to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said the Clinton administration seeks nearly \$2.5 billion in an emergency aid package for the midwest flood disasters. \$600 million would be available for immediate assistance to farmers. Espy noted that crop loss estimates will change as later results are tallied.

OTHER ASSISTANCE -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy has made a number of changes in farm programs that do not need Congressional approval. The Farmer Owned Reserve regulations are being amended to allow producers to enter the Reserve who did not meet the earlier deadline of April 30. 1992 wheat and feedgrain loan regulations are being amended allowing extensions of the loans maturing in June, July and August to extend the loans to September 30. 1992 soybean loans maturing during those months can delay settlement until September 30. And, producers will be allowed to use their conservation Reserve Program acreage for haying or grazing. The annual CRP payment will be reduced by 50 percent for the acreage that is hayed or grazed. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

EMERGENCY FOOD STAMPS -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved emergency food stamps for flood victims in 12 Illinois counties. "This disaster has left thousands of people in need of food assistance," Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy said. "One of our priorities is to ensure access to food for all those affected by the flooding." The approval allows one month's worth of emergency food stamps to be issued to people who have lost income or food as a result of the midwest flooding. People who already were participating in the Food Stamp program may receive replacement benefits if they lost food or food stamps. **Contact: Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623.**

FLOOD ASSISTANCE INFORMATION -- USDA has prepared a 20-minute video tape about its various assistance programs available to victims of the midwest floods. The tape reviews help provided by the Farmers Home Administration, Soil Conservation Service, Food and Nutrition Service, Extension Service, and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. Copies have been distributed to USDA county offices in the flooded states and to several TV stations serving the region. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

FORUM ON INCOME AND AG EXPORT POLICY -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy will conduct a forum in Washington, D.C. on ways to improve farm income and agricultural exports. The forum will be held Monday, August 2, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., in USDA's Jefferson Auditorium. Regional forums on income and export policies will be conducted at future dates in the Southeast, Midwest and Southwest. The forum is one of several that Espy is conducting around the country. Topics include food safety and meat inspection; reorganizing USDA; the protection and development of rural America; the environment; hunger in America; and reforming crop insurance. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

STATEWIDE IN NEW MEXICO -- Electronic Benefits Transfer, the plastic card alternative to paper food stamps, will be expanded from test sites in New Mexico to statewide. Ellen Hass, assistant secretary of agriculture for Food and Consumer Services, says the results of a study of the electronic benefits transfer system show that it is cost-effective. The program is also being installed statewide in Maryland. Haas says that by 1995 the transfer system will replace paper food stamps in all states. **Contact: Julie Bernell (202) 720-7711.**

SOLAR POWERED FLY TRAP -- With the suburbs expanding into farmland, farm-bred flies become a pest. Controlling flies with insecticides can cost a farmer \$5,000 a year. USDA scientists have invented a solar powered plastic container that kills flies but not beneficial insects. Solar powered electric grids on the sides and top of the pyramid shaped container provide just enough shock to kill houseflies. The flies are attracted by light reflected off the white plastic. The pyramid is harmless to humans, animals and birds. Effectiveness is improved in conjunction with other on-the-farm fly controls. Commercial versions are available for under \$400, and lower priced models for homes may be on the market soon. **Contact: Lawrence Pickens (301) 504-8274.**

FARM FIGURES -- Farm numbers overall are continuing to decrease, but the rate of change varies considerably when considering farm size. USDA estimates farm numbers are declining about 23,000 per year. But recent studies show that between 1974 and 1987 the smallest farms, those with less than 50 acres, increased by 90,000 and farms with 1,000 or more acres rose by 14,000. The major decline was in farms with 50 to 999 acres, they fell by 300,000. Recent trends indicate that the loss of mid-size farms is much slower than in the 1980's. Of the 2.1 million farms in the U.S. only 6,000 were controlled by nonfamily corporations, about 3 percent, and the number has remained steady. The average annual net income from farm operations was \$3,994. Only 18 percent of farm operator households received more income from the farm than off the farm in 1991. **Contact: Frederick Gale (202) 219-0525.**

SOYBEAN STOCKS -- U.S. supply of soybeans is tightening. A projected eight percent drop in supply will push up prices and encourage imports from Canada of oilseed meals and vegetable oils. U.S. soybean exports are expected to be down 12 percent to 680 million bushels. Soybean crush is projected at 1.2 million bushels, down one percent from 1992/93. Soybean ending stocks of 225 million bushels would be the lowest since 1988/89. **Contact: Jim Matthews (202) 720-5448.**

RECORD PORK PRODUCTION -- Commercial pork production in the U.S. is projected to reach 17.3 billion pounds, a new record. Hog prices are expected to fall from near \$50 into the low \$40's per cwt by late summer as production rises seasonally. Returns will be near the breakeven point. The midwest flooding has increased the uncertainty about feed costs. If feed prices change significantly, producers will likely reevaluate production plans for 1994. **Contact: Leland Southard (202) 219-1285**

DAIRY REFERENDUM -- Dairy farmers producing milk for commercial use during April 1993 will be eligible to vote in a mail referendum, August 5-16, on whether to continue the National Dairy Promotion and Research Program. Ballots and return envelopes can be obtained at county ASCS offices through August 16. Ballots must be postmarked no earlier than August 5 or later than August 16. **Contact: Connie Crunkleton (202) 720-8998.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1885 -- Gary Crawford reviews the "Flood of '93," its causes, effects, and the efforts to bring relief to its victims. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1367 -- solving insect mysteries; more credit for needy communities; floods and food prices; nature's anti-cancer compounds; water quality and public policy. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1877 -- USDA News Highlights; wheat outlook; Africanized bee update; manure pit dangers; measuring drought. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1630 -- Breeding for leaner beef; more efficient livestock breeding; high tech meets low tech; preserving boar semen; gene therapy. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tuesday, July 27, reports on farmers for NAFTA, crop and weather update, vegetable outlook; Thursday, July 29, catfish production, farm numbers and land assessment; Friday, July 30, ag prices; Monday, August 2, reports from the farm income forum, horticultural exports; Tuesday, August 3, cotton & wool update, crop & weather update. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on the Palmer drought index; DeBoria Janifer reports on a program to distribute fresh fruits and vegetables through a food bank.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen on the latest weather and crop conditions; USDA economist Ed Allen on wheat production and use; USDA economist Ron Gustafson on livestock production and prices; USDA transportation director Martin Fitzpatrick on grain traffic on the Mississippi River.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- DeBoria Janifer reports on a watermelon feast day; Pat O'Leary on protecting streams from farm waste runoff; Lynn Wyvill on a new environmentally-friendly process to make paper.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

A MAJOR STORY...is developing in the north-central area, says **Lynn Ketelsen** (Linder Farm Network, Willmar, MN). The corn and soybean crops will not make it to maturity. He says the freeze would have to be delayed to November 1, and that's not likely in his region. Lynn recently produced a half-hour program featuring farm broadcasters in eight states regarding crop conditions.

VERY DRY CONDITIONS...have impacted producers in North Carolina and South Carolina, says **Ken Tanner** (WRAL-TV/Tobacco Radio Network, Raleigh, NC). Thirty percent of the first soybean crop has been lost, and those planting a second crop in dry ground have seen no growth. South Carolina agricultural losses are estimated at nearly \$200 million.

WEATHER...has not come in moderate doses, says **Bill Wills** (WLW, Cincinnati, OH). Crops got in late due to wet conditions this spring, now intense heat is causing stress. The region needs rain. Bill plans to cover 20 county fairs this season.

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Office of Public Affairs
Radio-TV Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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THE WATER COMING SOUTH...shouldn't bother us, says **Don Molino** (Louisiana Agri-News Network, Baton Rouge, LA). He says the upper and lower sections of the Mississippi River are like comparing a drinking straw to a culvert. The upper is narrow and shallow, the lower is wide and deep. Don says cotton in the northern portion of the state that was damaged earlier this season by flooding is being plowed under and the acreage planted to soybeans. Producers plan to capture rising prices.

FARM PROGRAMMING...is being performed by **Scott Allen** (KSOO, Sioux Falls, SD) replacing **Tom Steever**. **Rich Garvin** has moved from KXRB, Sioux Falls, SD to WJAG, Norfolk NE.

FARM DEPARTMENT...has been closed, says **Max Molleston** (WKBF/WPXR, Rock Island, IL). New owners ended a 27-year operation. Max is looking, (319) 359-1057.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division